

wildfires 2012



MONTANA FIRE STATS

2,206 WILDFIRES

1,190 human-caused fires burned 170,774 acres. 1,016 lightning-caused fires burned 1,003,917 acres.

119 LARGE FIRES

Large fires comprised 993,286 acres — 85% of the acreage burned this season.

464 STRUCTURES DESTROYED

1/3 of the structures lost were homes. Hundreds more were saved through fire suppression efforts.

\$113.5 MILLION ESTIMATED COSTS

\$50.17 Million in Net State Costs.

Montana's 2012 fire season began in earnest with the Antelope Lane, Pony and Corral Fires in late June. The last large fire in Montana — the Eagle Creek Fire on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation — was reported in late September.

The 2012 fire season brought many challenges — and many successes — as firefighters were faced with extreme, “red flag” conditions for most of the summer. Despite a season which surpassed all others in the past decade from many standpoints, firefighter safety, interagency cooperation, and safe, aggressive firefighting were mainstays of the fire suppression effort. This report summarizes the season from the perspective of the Montana DNRC and includes information about fire statistics, aviation management, fire suppression, prevention, training and financial data.



2012 FIRE SEASON: AN ACTIVE YEAR

<u>Year</u>	<u># Fires</u>	<u>Acres</u>
2012	410	556,247
Mutual Aid	192	
False Alarms	108	
Total Incidents	710	
County Assist	88	512,569
Direct Protection	322	11,311
% less than 10 acres	305	94.7%
Homes Lost	106	

"Mid-Rivers {Communications} tower sites at Ashland and Home Creek Butte and quite likely many of our other facilities were saved from severe damage and were able to remain operational thanks to the efforts of these brave individuals."

Bill Wade, General Manager



AVIATION

The DNRC Aviation program had one of its busiest years ever in 2012, logging nearly 2000 flight hours and delivering close to 3.5 million gallons of water and fire retardant.

Five UH-1H helicopters are the workhorses of the program. During the summer, the ships are stationed in Missoula, Kalispell and Helena and two are available statewide for initial attack support. The aviation staff includes six full-time mechanics, four full-time pilots, and 15 seasonal pilots.

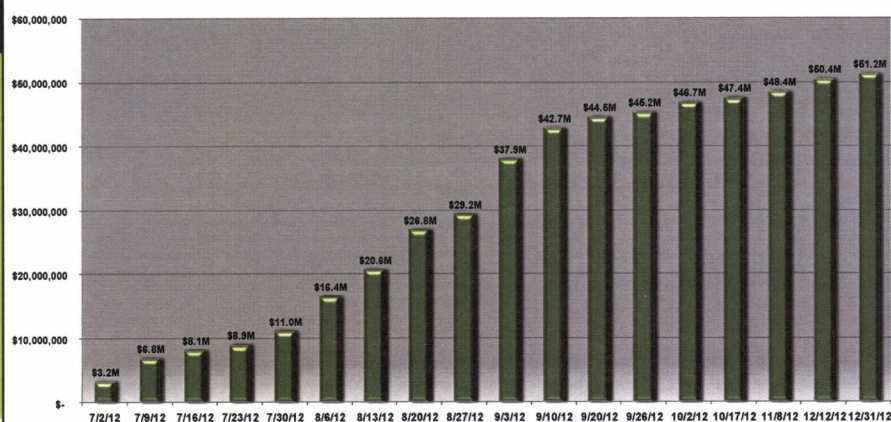


FEMA FIRES

The Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) program through FEMA provides partial reimbursement of suppression costs for wildfires that threaten significant population, infrastructure, or other critical areas. There were four fires in Montana which qualified for FMAG assistance:

ESTIMATED NET COSTS TO THE STATE OF MONTANA FOR THE 2012 FIRE SEASON: \$50.174 MILLION.

Net FY13 Fire Cost



Fire	Total Cost	Est. FEMA Reimbursement	Est. Net State Costs
Corral	671,706	436,609	235,097
Dahl	3,500,000	2,275,000	1,225,000
Ash Creek	7,500,000	1,998,750	1,076,250
19 Mile	3,600,000	1,708,200	919,800
Total	15,271,706	6,418,559	3,456,147

Corral and Dahl Fires were 100% DNRC; Ash Creek and 19 Mile fires were cost-share at 41% and 73% respectively.

SAFETY

Safety is always the top priority in DNRC'S Fire & Aviation Management Program. During the 2012 fire season, there were 41 reports of injury to DNRC fire personnel. The majority (23) of the injuries were related to trips/falls and sprains/strains. All of the reported injuries were minor and did not result in significant loss of work time. Reported injuries are across all fire & aviation management functions, including aircraft operations, motor vehicles, hiking, use of hand tools, and work in fire camp.

Taking into account the complexity of the work performed by our firefighters and the risks inherent in firefighting, the 2012 safety record is commendable. We will continue to learn from the injuries reported this year and, where possible, take measures to mitigate the risks of those injuries occurring in the future.

"An example of success is certainly our safety record. On Rosebud Incident alone, we had some 940 people, 85 engines, multiple aircraft and 170,000 acres of tough terrain. We covered 80,000 person hours without a serious accident or injury."

**Incident Commander
Stan Benes**



FIRE TRAINING

Busy fire seasons provide a wealth of training opportunities for young firefighters or those interested in taking on new responsibilities.

DNRC provides training to approximately 2500 firefighters each year. This includes everything from basic wildland firefighting courses to advanced incident command and fire line leadership. Many positions in fire management require completion of a position task book to demonstrate proficiency on an actual incident. During the 2012 fire season, 104 task books were completed and numerous others were partially completed and/or initiated.

DNRC DIRECT PROTECTION RESOURCES

**120 Firefighters ♦ 10 Fire Lookouts ♦ 50 Engines
6 Water Tenders ♦ 5 Helitenders ♦ 7 Helicopters
3 Fixed-wing aircraft ♦ 4 Radio Caches ♦ 3 Mobile
Kitchens ♦ 6 Interagency Dispatch Centers (14 Total)**

In addition to these resources, more than 400 pieces of equipment are positioned in counties across the state through DNRC'S County Cooperative Fire Protection Program. Through this partnership, local fire organizations respond to wildfires aided by equipment and training from the DNRC.

The DNRC utilizes additional help through agreements with neighboring states and Canada under the Northwest Compact. In 2012, Canadian air tankers, a heli-rappel crew, a helicopter from Idaho, and strike teams of engines from several states were assigned in Montana to aid response and suppression efforts. These resources were positioned around the state to respond to emerging incidents during initial attack.

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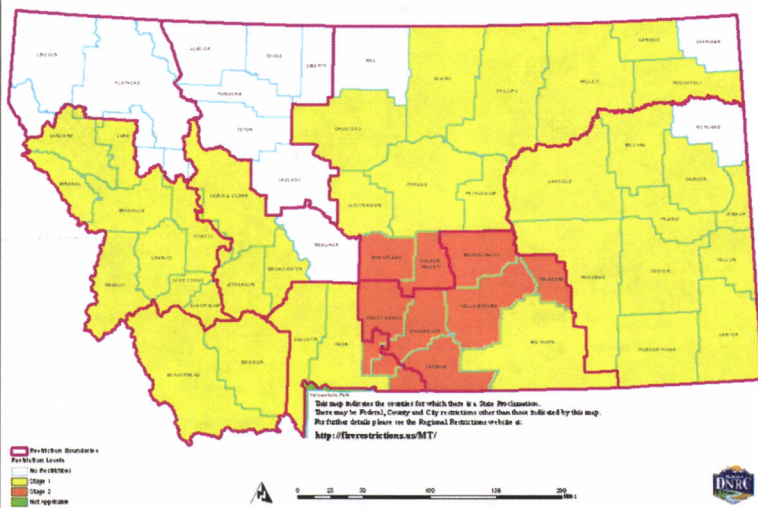
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BALL NO

FIRE PREVENTION & EDUCATION

RESTRICTIONS AS OF 0001 HOURS - SEPTEMBER 7, 2012



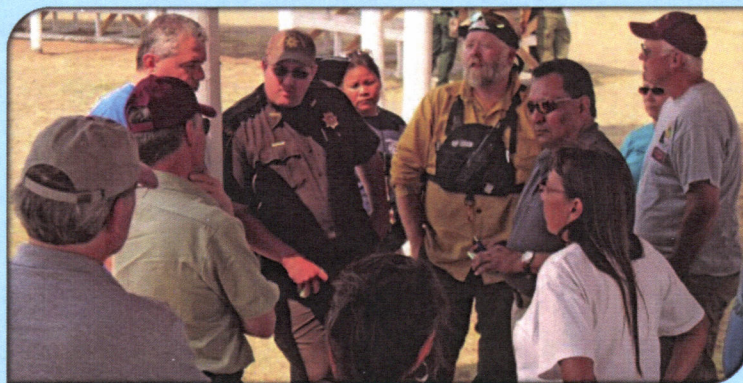
The goal of DNRC'S fire prevention program is the reduction of human-caused wildfires and education of homeowners residing in Montana's wildland urban interface regarding their responsibilities to take measures to protect their homes. In 2012, 44 counties were under fire restrictions for most of the summer. In addition, National Fire Prevention Teams were assigned in Billings and Missoula to assist with fire prevention efforts statewide.

INTERAGENCY INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS

Northern Rockies Fire Teams Have a Busy Season

- ♦ 42 Assignments
- ♦ Average of 51 days on assignment per team member
- ♦ Some members were assigned for 68 days.

This number of assignments, combined with assignments outside of Montana earlier in the year, underscore the commitment and sacrifice made by members of these teams. Continued investment in team training, equipment and logistical support is vital to maintain the staffing and availability of this important fire management resource.



When wildfires exceed local capability to manage them, incident management teams (IMTs) are often called upon to provide assistance. These interagency teams include professionals from local, state, tribal and federal organizations and their mission is to manage the incident in accordance with directions from the host agency. The "type" of team (Type 3, Type 2 or Type 1) assigned depends upon the complexity of the incident, as determined by a number of factors. Type 1 IMTs are brought in to manage the highest complexity incidents.